



The Center for Media and Democracy
Publisher of ALECexposed.org, PRWatch.org, and
SourceWatch.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 17, 2012
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EMBARGOED until 11:00am CDT, 12:00 pm EDT

CMD Releases New Report
“ALEC Exposed in Wisconsin: The Hijacking of a State”
*Watchdog Groups Call for Attorney General Investigation of
ALEC Lobbying Activities*

MADISON -- Today, the Madison-based Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) released a new report that details the exclusive network of corporate lobbyists and special interest groups that influence the Wisconsin legislature through the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

“This report reveals details of the extraordinary influence of ALEC and its agenda on the Wisconsin legislature and our laws over the past 16 months,” said Lisa Graves, executive director of the Center for Media and Democracy. “This corporate-backed agenda undermines the rights of Wisconsin families while advancing the agenda of huge corporations and special interest groups.”

Six weeks ago, corporate members of ALEC started jumping ship when it became known that Florida’s “Stand Your Ground Law” -- linked to the Trayvon Martin shooting -- spread to over two dozen states via ALEC. So far, 14 corporate members and 45 legislators from other states have quit the organization.

“We document how global corporations are buying influence with Wisconsin legislators through potentially illegal gifts called ALEC ‘scholarships,’” said CMD Law Fellow Brendan Fischer, the report's author. “ALEC’s corporate members are not only giving Wisconsin legislators thousands of dollars of campaign contributions, they are also buying flights and hotel rooms. These gifts undermine Wisconsin’s reputation for clean government and the strict ethics rules designed to protect the voices of Wisconsin residents in our state's democracy.”

(MORE)

CMD asked the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board in March to determine whether ALEC member legislators receiving gifts of flights and hotel rooms from ALEC's corporate members violates state ethics and lobbying laws. Now, CMD and Common Cause in Wisconsin are asking Wisconsin's Attorney General to look into ALEC's lobbying activities.

"It is time for the Attorney General to determine that ALEC is primarily a corporate lobbying group masquerading as a charity," said Common Cause in Wisconsin Executive Director Jay Heck. "ALEC's corporate members fund the organization to access and influence state legislators, and it is unacceptable to get a tax deduction for doing so."

Here are some of the key findings from the new report:

- 32 bills or budget provisions reflecting ALEC model legislation were introduced in Wisconsin's 2011-2012 legislative session;
- 21 of these bills or budget provisions have passed, and two were vetoed;
- More than \$276,000 in campaign contributions were made to ALEC legislators in Wisconsin from ALEC corporations since 2008;
- More than \$406,000 in campaign contributions were made to ALEC alumnus Governor Walker from ALEC corporations over the same time period for his state campaign account;
- At least 49 current Wisconsin legislators are known ALEC members, including the leaders of both the House and Senate as well as other legislators holding key posts in the state. Additionally, the Governor, the Secretary of the Department of Administration, and the Chairman of the Public Service Commission are ALEC alumni; and
- At least 17 current legislators have received thousands of dollars of gifts cumulatively from ALEC corporations in the past few years, in the form of flights and hotel rooms filtered through the ALEC "scholarship fund" (complete "scholarship" information is not available).

ALEC describes itself as the largest "independent member association of state legislators" in the country, but over 98 percent of its nearly \$7 million in annual revenue comes from corporations and sources other than legislative dues, which are \$50 a year. Representatives from America's largest corporations, including Koch Industries, Wal-Mart, Exxon Mobil, Reynolds, and Altria/Phillip Morris fund ALEC and sit on its private sector governing board.

The full report can be found at ALECexposed.org. The letter to the Attorney General can be found [here](#).

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